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PURPOSE

1. To help applicants meet financial costs of special needs items as outlined in the regulations.

PRINCIPLE

2. Special need benefits are limited by the real “needs” of the applicant.
3. Items approved may vary from time to time by policy instruction or management decision in order to make the most appropriate use of budgeted amounts.
4. Applicants may appeal decisions to refuse a Special Need request.

POLICY

5. Items of Special Need specifically addressed in Regulation 19 are:

Transportation	(Instruction 6-3)
Special Care	(Instruction 6-4)
Disability Allowance	(Instruction 6-6-1)
Personal Care	(Instruction 6-5)
School Allowance	(Instruction 6-12)
Employment Expense	
Child Care Expenses	
Housekeeping/Home Care	(Instruction 6-6)
Respite Care	(Instruction 6-6-2)
Repairs to Property	(Instruction 6-11)
Furniture and Appliances	(Instruction 6-10)
Damage and Security Deposits	
Shelter/Utility Arrears	(Instruction 6-13)
Dental Services	(Instruction 6-8)
Optical Service	(Instruction 6-7)
Burial Expense	(Instruction 6-14)

Other items of Special Need may be addressed in approved policy.

6. All Special Need requests require prior approval by a person with appropriate authority.

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7. Special Need expenditures are under the control of the Department which will designate staff to assist with monitoring and control. In addition to the general limitations on signing authority, the Area Coordinator may choose to further restrict signing authority for specific items or periods of time.

8. Continuing Special Needs

_____ (a) “Continuing Special Needs” are those items that are required on a regular basis but are not considered basic need items as described in Regulation 16-18.

(b) Unless otherwise limited in policy, signing authority limits for staff with Social Assistance authorizations are:

_____ Up to \$500/month	Workers
Up to \$5,000/month	Administrative Officer
_____ Up to \$10,000/month	Case Work Supervisor
Over \$25,000/month	Area Coordinator
_____	Director of Social Programs/ Deputy Minister of Social Services and Seniors

(c) Continuing Special Needs are to be added to the applicant’s basic need items for the purpose of calculating the budget deficit.

(d) Continuing Special Needs shall be reviewed at regular or strategic times to ensure the “need” continues and the amount of payment remains appropriate.

9. Non-Continuing Special Needs

(a) “Non-Continuing Special Needs” are those items that are required on an irregular or one-time-only basis.

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(b) Unless otherwise limited in policy, signing authority limits for staff with Social Assistance authorization are:

Up to \$500/per fiscal year	Worker
Up to \$1,000/per fiscal year	Supervisors/Designated Supervisors
Up to \$5,000/per fiscal year	Designated Staff
Over \$5,000 per fiscal year	Director of Social Programs/ Deputy Minister Social Services and Seniors

(c) The applicant is expected to explore options such as borrowing the money or obtaining a payment-over-time agreement where possible.

(d) In situations where the Special Need request is made by someone who would not otherwise qualify for assistance, the cost of the Special need item may be added to other allowable expenses (Regulation 6(1) and 6(2)). Payment shall not exceed the amount of the budget deficit. (For applicants receiving free drugs only, refer to paragraph 14.).

The total cost (or estimate) of an item of Special Need shall be divided by the number of months over which such a cost would normally be paid by other persons in the community. The “monthly” cost then becomes the allowable expense in calculating the budget deficit.

(e) Requests for all Special Need items from applicants not in receipt of benefits must be referred to the designated authority for authorization.

10. Special Situations

(a) Occasionally, a Special Need request is received from someone who would not qualify for Social Assistance on the basis of the budget deficit test, even with the Special Need item included, yet who may not be able to meet the emergency or essential expense. This is usually because the family is committed to other ordinary and essential expenses that are not allowed in regulation, such as insurance premiums, car payments, credit account payments, vehicle operating costs, etc.

(b) These regular expenses may be included in the budget deficit calculation where it has been clearly established that such regular payments are necessary and cannot be deferred without causing other hardship.

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(c) Payments are not to be made under this provision if there is any possibility for relief to the applicant via other financial options such as:

- (I) Deferring other loan payments (to be added to the end of the loan period or until financial circumstances improve);
 - (ii) Refinancing existing debt to include the Special Need item;
 - (iii) Borrowing against equity (house, car, other real or personal property); and
 - (iv) Family help (personal loan, etc.).
- (d) Payments to applicants under this provision shall be no more than the budget deficit produced by including the cost of the Special Need item. However, if the budget deficit (including all expenses) is greater than the cost of the Special Need item, the worker shall provide for the Special Need item only.
- (e) Payments in these special situations shall be authorized by the designated authority.

PROCEDURE

11. Special Need requests should be stated with supporting documentation, including:

- (a) Specific description of item required;
- (b) Reason for the request;
- (c) Cost (or accurate estimate);
- (d) Resources or options explored; and
- (e) Any other information relevant to the request.

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12. Actual costs of Special Need estimates are to be confirmed as soon as final data is available. If there is some doubt about the accuracy of the estimate, the worker may wish to:

(a) Have client sign an agreement to repay any excess (as in transportation advances); or

(b) Advance a portion of the cost estimate, withholding final payment until actual costs are known (as in construction or service contracts).

13. Where applicants are receiving drugs only, drug expenses shall not be used to determine eligibility for Special Needs (as it is not an out-of-pocket expense to the client). Such applicants would not ordinarily qualify for regular assistance and, therefore, eligibility for the "Items of Special Need" must be determined without inclusion of the drug expense.